



*Testimony by Holly Thoms on behalf of Michiganders for Shelter Pets
Before the Michigan Senate Agriculture Committee
In support of S.B. 423 & S.B. 424
June 14, 2012*

My name is Holly Thoms. I am from Eaton Rapids, Michigan and I am a co-founder of Michiganders for Shelter Pets, a coalition of Michigan voters, animal shelters, animal protection organizations, businesses and professionals dedicated to advancing the welfare of Michigan's shelter pets. I thank Chairman Hune for hearing SB 423 and 424, and submit the following testimony in their support.

SB 423 and 424 would require that all Michigan animal shelters and Class B dealers use only euthanasia by injection (known as EBI) on cats and dogs. Michigan is ready to eliminate the practice of gassing animals from its shelters. There is widespread support through the state for passage of these bills.

Michigan would not be alone in having a law of this kind. Nineteen other states have banned the use of gas chambers. Most recently--in fact, late last year--Alabama banned gas chambers. So this is not a novel concept.

On a national level, all animal welfare organizations agree that EBI is the only humane, safe, and cost-effective means of euthanasia for animals in animal shelters. This conclusion is based on decades of research and on-site assistance to shelters regarding humane, medicinal practices toward animals. It is the method preferred by the American Veterinary Medical Association, the National Animal Control Association, and the Association of Shelter Veterinarians. EBI is the method used in veterinarians' offices. An injection of Sodium Pentobarbital, when properly used by a trained technician, causes loss of consciousness within seconds after it is administered.

Michiganders for Shelter Pets conducted a survey of Michigan shelters and has determined that only 4 shelters currently utilize gas (either partially or exclusively) to euthanize shelter animals. Those shelters are:

- Berrien County Animal Control (carbon monoxide) – Has an EBI backup
- Branch County Animal Control (carbon monoxide) – Has an EBI backup
- Cass County Animal Control (carbon monoxide) – Has an EBI backup
- Van Buren County Animal Control (carbon monoxide) – Has an EBI backup

Each of these four remaining shelters has an EBI backup in place, thus making the transition quite simple. In addition, there are funds available from an anonymous Michigan donor to pay for removing the gas chamber and dismantling it. There is free EBI training also available. Dr. Wendy Swift with Ottawa Animal Hospital is a certified EBI trainer and is available to assist these shelters. Therefore, there is no financial barrier to passing these bills if these shelters wish to change to EBI.

Throughout this legislative process I have talked to many, many people about gas chambers in Michigan shelters. I did not speak to one person that stated they support the use of gas chambers. Michigan citizens expect their animal shelters to be safe, compassionate havens for homeless pets, and to deliver only the most modern, humane, and cost-effective care and services for the animals in their charge.

Senators, please hold a vote swiftly and move SB 423 and SB 424 along to become law. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Holly Thoms
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